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DEVELOPMENT OF EAST GERMAN SHIPYARDS

Friedrich Roesner

While West Germany is being deprived of every opportunity for future development in shipbuilding, a shipbuilding industry has developed in the German Democratic Republic under a planned reconstruction program.

The center of this shipbuilding industry is in Mecklenburg, on the Baltic Sea coast which is particularly adapted to the industry. In 1945, there were no shipbuilding yards in existence in East Germany. With the exception of the Neptunwerft in Rostock, there were only small shipyards which were mainly concerned with the repair of fishing vessels and with the construction of small cutters for the coastal fishing industry. These shipyards were heavily damaged during the war, and they had only a very limited stock of machinery in 1945. The situation was the same with the inland shipyards on the Elbe River, in Boizenburg, Magdeburg, and Rosslau, and on the Havel River in Brandenburg.

In 1946, the workers returned to work and began to rebuild their industry. The first project was to repair the few remaining vessels of various types and to clear the shipping lanes of wreckage to recreate the possibility for inland shipping traffic.

In recognition of the importance of the fishing industry in feeding the population, the construction of wooden fishing cutters was started by small shipyards along the Baltic in 1946. In viewing the development of the shipyards, it should always be emphasized that it was the Soviet Army of Occupation which gave impetus to the rebuilding of larger shipyards and which supported construction on a large scale.

The following shipyards have been built along the Baltic coast: Boddenwerft in Damgarten, for the construction of fishing cutters; Volkswerft (people-owned shipyard), in Stralsund, for the construction of large steel fishing vessels, especially herring loggers; and the two large maintenance shipyards, Wismar and Warnemuende, for the repair and reconstruction of sea-going vessels.

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To restore the greatly reduced fishing fleet by new construction as rapidly as possible, the above-mentioned inland shipyards were also charged with the building of wooden and steel fishing vessels. The ship hulls produced there are transported on the inland waterways from the Elbe River via the Havel and Oder rivers to the Baltic Sea shipyards, where they are outfitted, and then receive the finishing touches at a newly established shipyard in Wolgast.

Within the framework of the Two-Year Plan, several large shipyards arose almost simultaneously. Already, they employ a labor force of almost 20,000 persons.

The first shipyard built was a repair yard in Wismar. In a few years, the labor force of this shipyard increased to several thousand employees, and it became necessary to coordinate the operating installations scattered throughout the harbor area, thereby creating the new Wismar repair yard originated.

Almost simultaneously, the construction of a second, even larger, repair yard was begun on the grounds of the former Kroegerwerft in Warnemuende. The harbor basin was cleared of wrecked ships, and a new quay was built with a number of fairly large workshops and auxiliary buildings, as well as an administration building.

A further expansion of these two shipyards through incorporation of newly constructed sections into the existing repair installations is planned in the course of the rebuilding of a German merchant marine. After the final construction work has been completed, between 1951 and 1955, the labor force of these shipyards will be nearly doubled. The German Democratic Republic's new freighters, which will be used to transport German-manufactured goods to the countries of the Far East, will be built here.

The most important of the Baltic coast shipyards is the Volkswerft in Stralsund, which was erected on the site of a former construction firm. Today, huge workshops and crane installations give an entirely new appearance to the shore side of Stralsund, where formerly only a few dilapidated wooden sheds stood. This shipyard can be described as the most modern installation in Europe for the series production of fishing luggers. Here, for the first time in the history of German shipbuilding, the bold attempt was made to produce in assembly line production a completely welded ship of the newest model, using the principles of sectional construction. In the immediate vicinity are located the preparatory workshops for steel and sheet-metal processing, workshops for machine construction, rigging, etc., and the storage area for sheet metal, steel, and wood. The proper arrangement of these workshops has reduced transportation of components to a minimum.

The magnitude of the workers' accomplishment in the construction of this shipyard can best be illustrated by the fact that only 17 months after the first ground was broken, the productive installations were able to start operations. On 28 June 1948, the foundation work was begun, and on 1 March 1949, Shop No 1 was taken over by the shipyard management and production was immediately begun. The first lugger was launched on the occasion of the October Revolution celebration in 1949 and was christened with that name.

Activists, led by the National Prize winner, Sack, played an important part in the construction of the shipyard and also in production, especially the building of the "Youth Luggers."

The shipyard management has accorded special attention to the training of new personnel. In the immediate vicinity of the shipyard, apprentice workshops have been erected, as well as four buildings serving as living quarters which, at present, house 600 apprentices in all branches of shipbuilding.

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The rapid growth of the labor force to several thousand men soon confronted the shipbuilding management with the difficult problem of housing. Here, again, the Soviet Occupation Force contributed their help by making available former barracks situated in the vicinity.

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